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*Publication date:*  
2017

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

*Citation (APA):*  
Ipsen, C., & Edwards, K. (2017). *PRINCIPLE 8. ACTING WITH CONSIDERATION FOR LEVEL OF INFLUENCE*. Paper presented at 12th International Conference on Occupational Stress and Health, Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States.

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## PRINCIPLE 8. ACTING WITH CONSIDERATION FOR LEVEL OF INFLUENCE

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Implementation of preventive organization level intervention activities have a high risk of failing, which means that organizational sources of work-related stress are at risk of remaining unaffected.

One explanation of implementation failures is that participants have limited level of influence over the choice of activities. Consequently, participants do not have sufficient power and control to make the necessary decisions and changes.

This paper addresses one of the recommendation in the manifesto - Acting with consideration for level of influence. Level of influence should be considered when the project participant decide on the specific/concrete activities, more specifically the intersection between the exploration phase (Ipsen & Andersen 2013) or action planning (Nielsen et al. 2010) and the implementation phase . We present findings from two studies (Jarebrant et al. 2016; Ipsen et al. 2015) of participatory interventions.

Covey's work on circles of Concern and Control (Covey 1989) forms the basis for the principle. In an organizational level intervention context, it means that the change agent, problem owner and participants together decide the scope of the intervention. The scope should focus on interventions where the project participants can exert sufficient influence to control the design and content of the intervention activities and the subsequent implementation process. Control means that the person in charge of the intervention has legitimate power (Raven 1992) to decide which changes the participants are to implement. Control also implies that the changes lie within the responsibilities of the person in charge, and s/he can take necessary actions, if needed.

### Procedures

To operationalize the principle of Acting with consideration for level of influence, we have designed an intervention procedure that supports the process of scoping of intervention. In two qualitative studies the participants first outline their work-related problems and causes hereof. Second, they list and prioritize which work related topics they prefer should get managed. The process is an explorative participatory approach involving workers and managers and methods like the FishBone workshop (Ipsen et al. 2015) and prioritization matrix (Pelletier et al. 1994) can form the basis for this process. When the participants have identified all relevant work-related topics, they prioritize these, based on impact and difficulty. Impact is the expected effect on the problem and difficulty is an assessment of the projects ability to make the necessary change. The result is a list of topics ranked after participant endorsement and interests. During prioritization, the project responsible(s) must consider which of the work related topics are achievable and where they can act according to their level of influence. Consequently, a topic, with limited control gets a low priority even though it has high endorsement.

The outcome of the considerations, prioritization and the decision process is a prioritized list of topics, which the project responsible(s) control and have influence on, both in terms of decision and during the implementation. Topics beyond influence are taken off the list and the top two topics are implemented.

### Analysis

The aim of the analysis was to identify if the decided work-related topics were implemented or they failed. Data from semi-structured interviews of the participants together with data from the final Chronicle Workshop (Gensby 2014; Hvid et al. 2008) were analyzed using a qualitative analysis method (Miles and Huberman, 1994). First, the data from the Chronicle Workshop was coded in an open coding process generating number of codes, which were then applied on the interview data.

### Results

Some work environment problems may be outside the sphere of influence of the project working to solve work environment problems in general. Trying to take on such problem will lead to wasted resources and no effect. This paper has presented a procedure to include consideration of the level of influence in intervention prioritization. The method has demonstrated its worth in two projects where problems and causes were identified but interventions discarded because the project group did not have the necessary level of influence to solve the problem. Finally, the studies show that the priorities change when the project responsible act with consideration for level of influence.

### Practical implications

The risk of this approach is tied to operationalizing the relationship between change agent and those who are to implement the changes integrated in their work. This relationship may become strained and erode the respect and trust reducing the relationship to a dysfunctional project manager/subordinate relation because of a feeling of betrayal.

The risk of not applying this principle is a likelihood for more failures to the implementation that can lead to frustrations etc. and of course lack of implementation of the specific change.

#### Conclusion

The claim of this principle is that the project responsible(s) and participants have to consider their level of control and influence when they choose what changes to implement as part of the intervention.

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